

SUNDAY MAGAZINE

Of the BOSTON SUNDAY POST

PART 5

BOSTON, MASS. FEBRUARY 25, 1912

20 PAGES

REPRINTED, 1912, BY AMERICAN SUNDAY MAGAZINE, NEW-YORK



AH LEE BUNG

BY WALLACE IRWIN



"Me Sabbe Plenty—Japan-boy Thlow Bück-hat, China-boy Make Sweet-talk—All Same Y. M. C. A."



CLOVES of sunset color were beginning to creep through the Santa Clara apricot orchards, when Mr. Jiro Uremoto bailed his cavalcade on the county road, then turned in at the gatepost bearing a tin letter box marked "B. F. Oliver." Mr. Jiro, being godlike, rode alone in a red backboard; but he was stoutly supported in the rear by three crate wagons bearing fifty Japanese laborers, and as many quaint patent leather suitcases.

There was a curious uniformity about that little army of coolies with their despicable ready-made suits and headgear fashioned to resemble style by some Mad Hatter of Shoddyville; but Mr. Jiro was of finer cloth. His straw hat, fearfully new and modish, was circled by a ribbon of noisy blue and yellow; mottled purple shone above his new tan shoes; and his suit was fresh from the tailor's iron, of an assertive check, furnished with diagonal pockets. He smoked Egyptian cigarettes; for was he not a super-Japanese? By profession he was a boss contractor of coolie labor. His followers looked up to him and called him "Master"; but the local fruit growers, disdaining the rolling syllables of his island name, usually addressed him as "Harry."

The procession rounded the dusty curve leading to the ranch house. An almond tree shook angrily beside the road as Ah Lee Bung, a tall, plump old Chinese with scant, gray pigtail, rose up from behind a fence and focused on the interlopers his one baneful, flat Eddied eye. The other eye had doubtless been equally baneful and equally flat Eddied but it not gone to join its ancestor two score years before.

"What fo?" demanded Ah Lee Bung of the passing Jiro, pointing dramatically at the little brown brothers in the crate wagons.

"Pigtail! I disgust at your nationality!" retorted Mr. Jiro, haughtily snapping up his horse. "This animal was Jiro's proudest possession, which he valued even more highly than his college cut suit and straw hat."

"Ah! I sabbe you! You catchee Japanese swell-

head!" shouted Bung after the departing conquerors. Here followed an oration in Chinese that Jiro did not understand; and this was perhaps fortunate, for Ah Lee Bung was of the people who invented the art of repartee.

JUDGE OLIVER, grown to look like a noble Spaniard in that golden sun, showed his tanned skin and snowy goatee at the door of the ranch house and came forth to greet the Samurais, who were now standing ankle-deep in the dusty road.

"What's the matter, Harry? You're two days late," he said, addressing Jiro.

"Thank you," replied the contract boss with the air of one who has just received a compliment. "These Japanese boys is very sufficient workman, yes 'deed! Intelligent—oh! I gather them more hastily than I could."

"There's fifty of 'em, according to contract," said Tommy Oliver, a tall college boy in khaki.

"We very prompt delivery," piped Jiro. His pride was to know everything American, his ambition to learn more.

"Two days late—that looks like prompt delivery!" commented the Judge.

The fruit crop was coming ripe with terrific swiftness, and speedy gathering meant everything. There was a labor famine up and down the Santa Clara Valley, and the Olivers, for the first time in their experience, were forced to employ Japanese pickers. The boss, in such cases, usually contracts to pick, sort, cut, and dry the entire crop for market.

"You'll be ready to put your gang to work tomorrow morning?" asked Judge Oliver anxiously. The sun was now swinging low over the Coast Range.

"Ah, yes, Mr. Sir!" answered Jiro the business man. "Tomorrow very strict my intelligent men work. Yes. But I must demand one different arrangement, please."

The Japanese drew his stubby mustache above his prominent teeth in one long, hissing smile.

"One different arrangement!" thundered the Judge. "Do you mean to say you're going to back out at this stage of the proceedings?"

"Oh, how sorry we should be so depraved!" exclaimed the fashionable Harry. "Yet one slight command we

must require." Jiro looked over the harrowed acres to where the venerable Ah Lee Bung, clad in a blue jumper, stooped Ceres-like in the act of pouring golden apricots into an open crate. "We must be excused from our

prejudice, which is too bad. Chinese and Japanese are accustomed to enjoy considerable hatred from each other. Therefore, if we work in field with him," pointing to the patient Bung, "we shall be unable to do so."

"But Bung's been with us for years," spoke up Tommy. "He's a good sort—no real harm in him. I'm sure you'll find him all right to work with."

"Doubtless he are very delicious," responded Jiro. "Excuse us from our prejudice. Chinese cause us national disgust."

Judge Oliver checked his rising irritation at this declaration of independence. The need of labor was dire; but he had no intention of abandoning Bung the faithful and true.

"You fellows go to work," he said diplomatically. "We'll see that Bung doesn't cause you any disturbance."

"We do bow best we can for friendship, Judge Oliver," said Jiro; "but this Chinese must not protrude too much. Otherwise we quit."

He turned to his men and spoke the liquid language of the islands. Mechanically and without a word the obedient Samurais mounted their wagons, three huddled groups of human machines. Jiro, lightly flicking the dust from his knit silk necktie, mounted his backboard, and the entourage rumbled away toward the quarters behind the pepper grove.

BUNG—oh, Bung!" shouted Judge Oliver, beckoning to the blue-jumpered man at work among the fruit trees.

"All rite, Judge Olivah," responded Bung, assembling that air of affable adoration with which he always addressed his boss. He was getting old. He had been with the Olivers now for twenty years, and the family had grown fossilically attached to this faithful, temperamental benchmark.

"Bung," said the Judge, "Harry the Jap has brought fifty men over to pick the crops this year."

"I see him," granted the yellow man, mischief glint-

A CAPTAIN UNAFAID

PART III.

Narrated by CAPTAIN JOHN O'BRIEN to HORACE SMITH



The General and His Companions Came Out to Meet Us in a Fishing Boat.

AFTER the tags that set out to follow the Bermuda from New York had been lost in the snowstorm that was sent to aid us, we kept on to the eastward until we were too far from the shore for our emble to be followed in case the weather cleared suddenly, and then turned south and ran down to Atlantic City to pick up General Cabrito Garcia and his companions. They came out to meet us in a fishing boat from Great Egg Harbor, flying a white flag to identify them, and we got them aboard in short order, and proceeded southward at full speed. The whole movement was executed so quickly that the detection of their guard, and it was not until four days later that they were sure as to just what had happened. Then a frantic telegram was sent from Washington to all Collectors of Customs on the Atlantic Coast, ordering the seizure of the Bermuda; but we were halfway to our destination by that time.

With General Garcia, who was the central figure in the party, were Dr. Joaquin Castillo Duany, subdelegate at New York under Mr. Palma, and General Emilio Nufes, Chief of Expeditions for the revolution. Dr. Enrique Hernandez, who had an office at 808-B-4, and Madison-ave., New York, left a profitable practice to go along as staff surgeon for General Garcia. They were accompanied by nearly one hundred of their countrymen, who at the last minute had taken advantage of what seemed to be a favorable opportunity to go home and engage in the war. General Garcia breathed easier when he saw the Jersey coast going down astern, with no pursuing ship in sight, but he was still oppressed by the fear that the expedition would meet with no better fortune than those which had preceded it.

"I never expect to see Cuba again," he kept telling his staff officers.

"Don't you worry about that, General," I told him. "You are going to get to Cuba this time."

"That's what they have all told me," he replied mournfully.

"I never have told you that before, have I?"

"No."

"Then take my word for it. This time we will get you there."

My confidence impressed him a little, and he lost some of his melancholy; but it was not until we got

within sight of Cuba that he took a really cheerful view of things.

At an appointed place below Cape Henry we were long enough to pick up eight large, flat bottomed dories in which to land our passengers and the large cargo of arms. In all filibustering expeditions it is essential to put the cargo ashore as quickly as possible and get away, the more surely to avoid detection. Using the ship's boats, it would have taken us two days to land all the stuff we carried, and it was out of the question to take on the dories at New York; so it had been arranged that they should be waiting for us at a designated time and place.

With our cargo complete we took a circuitous course, to avoid coastwise traffic and wandering warships and revenue cutters. This involved some loss of time; but a few days made no difference, as compared with the greater safety this roundabout way assured. We were to land in a little indentation in the coast between Punta Maravi and Aguapote, five miles west of Baranca Light-house, which is about thirty miles west of Cape May, the eastern end of the island.

On the afternoon of March 25 I have to oft Inagua Island and looked the engines over carefully, examined all the bearings, cleared the fires, and gave the fireman a lesson in smokeless stoking—which is another thing no filibuster can afford to overlook. More than one expedition, otherwise well planned, has come to grief because proper precautions were not taken to prevent telltale smoke from pouring out of the ship's funnels. The wise way to put on coal, when it is desired to hold no signal that may result in capture, is to drop it in a bag just made of the furnace door, instead of throwing it far back and scattering it, and allow it to coke, after which it can be shovled up and pushed back. This trick I learned in my early filibustering days. The fire that is handled in this way makes just as much steam as is produced by the ordinary method, and gives off only a very little thin white smoke, which can scarcely be seen even at a short distance.

WE had aboard two Cuban pilots who, because of their profound familiarity with the coast, were to fix the course as soon as we made out the land and direct the ship to the point at which the landing was to be made. One of them was a traitor, as I had suspected for sometime before it was proved, and the other was at best an ignoramus. We raised Baranca Light soon after dark. The pilot who had been bribed to lead us into a trap declared it was the light at Cape May, and insisted that we run down the coast for thirty-five

miles, where I had no doubt the Spaniards were waiting for us in forces, both afloat and ashore. The other pilot, as he was called, agreed with his partner as to our location.

I knew where we were, and I knew they were wrong. Aside from my reckoning, the light at Cape May could be seen for eighteen miles, while the one at Baranca was only an eight-mile light, so there could be no mistaking them. Vigorously the two pilots swore that we were headed for Cape May; but I refused to change the course, as they demanded. When they saw that they could not influence me, the traitor undertook to convince General Nufes, who, as Chief of Expeditions, was in supreme authority on the ship, that I was betraying them, as they had often been betrayed before, and that if I had permitted to have my way they would soon find themselves in a snare from which there would be no escape.

I could not speak much Spanish; but I knew enough of it to understand the argument that was being made for my disaffection, and the situation was not a pleasant one. General Nufes knew nothing about me except what Hart had told him, and, as the Cubans had suffered so much from their friends that it had become an old story, it was natural to suppose, it seemed to me, that he would put more confidence in one such old countryman than in a comparative stranger.

Still, the General appeared to have faith in me, and as the best means of strengthening it, and at the time stopping the chatter and saving a lot of bother, I ordered the two alleged pilots off the bridge. The traitor next made rapidly enough to suit my rather impatient frame of mind; so I placed two or three hard kicks where they would be of the greatest assistance to him, much to the astonishment of General Garcia and his party. General Nufes said not a word throughout this proceeding, which momentarily relieved the tension we were all under, and I had great respect for him from that moment.

Setting our course by the lighthouse, I headed in for the landing place. Naturally, we were showing no lights. The engine room hatch was covered with tarpaulins, and there was a canvas cover over the mainmast light, with a small hole through which just enough of the compass to steer by could be seen. The Cubans are inveterate smokers, but I had told General Nufes that we must not smoke, under penalty of death, and he had given the order.

When we were within about five miles of the coast I made out a Spanish gunboat coming up from the eastward, heading the shore. Probably she was on her way to the trap into which the renegade pilot had planned to lead us. Before anyone else saw the warship I swung round in a wide circle to let her go by, and then stood on into the light. The pilot, who was only a fool, lived close to where the cargo was to be landed, and when we got close ashore he saw his house at the foot of Anvil Hill.

"Oh, look!" he whispered excitedly. "There my home, there my home! Captain O'Brien was right! Captain O'Brien was right!" He appeared to think he had made a great discovery.

THE deep water at that point prevented an anchor-
age, but it also enabled us to stand in close to the shore. Ed Martin's gun was landed first. After scouting around in search of hidden Spaniards he waved a lantern as a signal that the coast was clear. General Garcia and his staff, in full view of the Spaniards ashore. There were tears in the old warrior's eyes when he gripped my hand as he went over the side, and he probably would have hugged me, in the fashion of the country, if I had not backed away.

"You kept your word, Captain!" he said in a voice shaking with emotion. "The others had to me; but you didn't. We never will forget you. I hope you can continue in our country; for we need you."

The General, too, kept his word. He frequently mentioned me in his official reports, said many pleasant things about me, and kept me out of the firing line, and up to the day of his death was one of my best friends.

Following the landing of the officers, we proceeded to get the rest of the Cubans and the arms and ammunition ashore as quickly as possible. It was about ten-thirty when this work was begun, and it was completed by three o'clock in the morning. The traitorous pilot had stayed in the first boatload of passengers, evidently in the hope of escaping; but word was brought back to me that he was literally cut to pieces by his companions a moment after he landed. He had been armed with his partner's hatchet and prodded with machetes all the way to the door of his cabin.

Soon after General Garcia landed his little force was joined by a second band of men, who came to meet him and assist in carrying the arms back into the

mountains. While our cargo was being landed five Spanish warships were lying just round the point in Baracoa Bay, not more than five miles away. The next morning their commanders learned what had happened, and desperate but faith efforts were made to capture Garcia. At about the same time that we made this landing the Commodore landed an expedition near Matanzas, the Three Friends, under Napoleon Broward, put a third one ashore on the south coast, near Santiago. The Cuban cause seemed to be losing up.

We steamed away as soon as the last boatload was clear of the ship, and by daylight were round Cape Mayai and on our way to Puerto Cortés, Honduras, where we took on a cargo of bananas. General Nufiez, who was in a hurry to get back to New York with the good news, let us there and went to New Orleans on the fast little steamer that carried the report of the drawing of the old Louisiana lottery, which, perforce, had been transferred to Honduras.

We stayed at Puerto Cortés no longer than was necessary.

For the Bermuda was a British ship, and there was a good chance that a warship flying that flag might drop in and make trouble for us, for it was soon whispered about that we had landed a big expedition in Cuba. Soon after our departure this suspicion was verified to the satisfaction of the Honduras Government, and the old Scottish shipping agent through whom I had purchased the bananas was compelled to pay a fine amounting to five dollars for each member of the Bermuda's crew, for having done business with a filibuster. I had paid him enough for the fruit so that he could afford to stand this loss. He wrote Hart that, while he would be glad to sell him all the bananas he wanted, he hoped he would send no more filibustering ships down that way.

Before leaving New York I had urged that the ship return to that port instead of to Philadelphia, where Hart had his headquarters. I expected we should all be arrested, and had pointed out that there would be much less chance of convicting us in New York than in Philadelphia. In New York, with its large and influential Cuban colony, there was a great deal of public senti-

ment in favor of the revolution; while in Philadelphia they didn't even know there was a war on in Cuba, and the Federal Judge there believed that all filibusters ought to be hanged. When we put in at the Delaware Breakwater for orders I was surprised to find that we were to proceed to Philadelphia. As I had no desire to get tangled up in a lot of trouble that would be plainly seen and might possibly prevent further activity of the sort I liked, I contrived these orders to apply only to the ship. Thirty miles below Philadelphia the tug that had the vessel in tow put me ashore in New Jersey and I proceeded to my home near Newark.

As I had expected, the Bermuda's arrival at Philadelphia was quickly followed by the arrest of Hart and Mr. Murphy, and the suspension of the neutrality laws by conducting an armed, organized expedition against Spain, and the crew were held as witnesses. General Nufiez and I were included in the indictment; but we went into the retirement until news was brought to us that if we would submit to arrest our

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A REPORT ON A FEVERED BROW

BY SEWELL FORD

I AIN'T denyin' it, nor I ain't 'goin' to 'boast' tryin' to prove it either.

Maybe I am the highest salaried office boy in the business, and then again—well, all I got to say is that I ain't. I ain't wakin' up. I want 'em to give me the chuck. And I'd hand that to the whole board of directors as quick as I'd whisper it to you.

For if anyone thinks this is a real cure job of mine, stink here behind the brass gate and pass on. I want you who let in and who to keep out, I'd like to see 'em turn the trick. Anyway, it calls for something you can't work out by any set of rules, or learn at a business college. And you can't go by your feelin's, either. Why, there's some I have to bar out that I'd like to slide through, and there's others I have to throw the switch for prompt and senile when I had my way they'd get the sudden shunt.

Take Mellich, now. Somehow, it always grated on me to have Piddie turn him inside and pass him on into Mr. Ellins' private office, without so much as a word or a nod to me. Not that I got proctery just for his 'goin' over my head that way. I was something about the oily snide that Mellich had a habit of puttin' on as he tiptoed by, as if he was kind of testin' me with the fact that it didn't matter what I thought about him.

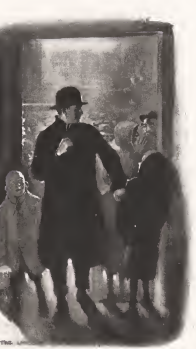
Mellich, say. I expect there's more nice nice folks by that name, but I ain't common, and I suppose if you knew 'em well the name wouldn't mean much of anything; but in this case—well, it was a real nice description, that's all. One of those meek, faded, sidin', hand-standin' 'T. Courtney Mellich was a friend of a hopeless, helpless sag to his shoulders, and a wisp of a droop to his eyelids and mouth corners, and a resigned, patient air, as much as to say, "Well, here I am! What are you going to do for me?" You could almost feel the weight of him on your shoulders the minute he stepped into the room.

Course, there was no mystery about why Mellich showed up at the Corrugated General Office about once every so often. Old Hickory was a bunch of a hand at workin' up a long pension roll; but T. Courtney seems to have got his name down at the head of the list. Anyway, he never appeared to miss mankind a touch when he came after it.

A relic of better days, Mellich was. Six or eight years ago he'd been sort of confidential secretary to an uncle who was makin' quite a splash fightin' industrialists down in New Street; he'd painted and put Uncle all to the bad, and when he went out of business Courtney was left stranded with a fairly complete wardrobe of custom made clothes, a college education, and a highly cultivated taste for New York.

For a time he drifted from one broker's office to another, wherever friends could jam him in; but he didn't seem to fit very well. He was a fat, slow, slow, though, they got him up as a bookkeeper, and those who didn't drop him entirely got into the habit of tossin' him a ten or so when they couldn't dodge him.

You wouldn't 't suspect Old Hickory's be in that class; but it turns out he was. And, as near as I could figure, Mellich never had any more claim on him than on any of the rest. They'd met a few times in Uncle's office before the grand scheme came, and that was all; but ever since I've been with the Corrugated we've had the pleasure



He Pushes Through 'Em Like He Was Acquainted.

of a call from Courtney about once in three months, and he's always slipped out smilin' humble and grateful, with a cheek gripped tight in his right hand.

And, as I said, it was always Piddie who'd spot him, extend the welcome hand, and snuggle him in prompt to within easy reachin' distance of Mr. Ellins. Trust Piddie! Even the name of an ex-plate was enough for him to get linker necked over. Besides, Courtney could do the measly monotonous society glibble like a cotton leader; so Piddie knew he must be the real thing, and treated him accordin'.

HERE the other day, though, when T. Courtney sidled in through the door humble and expectant, Piddie happens to be laid up at home with a bad cold, and the only one to extend the fraternal mitt was me. And, say, I just couldn't do it.

"Ah—er—I beg pardon," says Courtney, "but could I speak with Mr. Piddie?"

"Sure," says I, "if you want to blow a quarter against a Jersey call on the long distance. He's home."

"Oh—all," observes Courtney, shiftn' from one foot to the other. "Then perhaps you would be so kind as to present my card to Mr. Ellins?"

Hanged if he don't flash a regular collin' card, too, with "T. Courtney Mellich" engraved in old English. It's some pocket worn, and there's a few thumbprints on it; but it's a perfectly good card, for all that.

"Save it," says I, handin' it back. "You may need it next time. I'll tell him you're here."

"Ah, thank you—thank you very much!" murmurs

Courtney, backin' over to the settee and slummin' down patient with a newspaper wrapped round on his knee.

And there was nothin' left for me to do but trot in with the announcement. I finds Old Hickory with his back piled full of noon snuff and two stenographers busy takin' dictation; but, as Piddie always rates Courtney as preferred business, I follows suit.

"That Mellich duck's out there," says I.

"Eh?" says Mr. Ellins, on shootin' a puzzled glance at me from under the heavy eyebrows. "What Mellich duck?"

"The 'travelin' collection box," says I. "T. Courtney."

"Oh!" says he. "You mean Mr. Mellich, do you?"

"If you're partic'lar," says I, "make it 'Mister.'"

"Huh!" grunts Old Hickory, and I know by that intonation smile of his I'd got in bad at the jump. "Well, see that you do make it 'Mister' hereafter. And to help you remember, young man, I will tell you that Mr. Mellich once held quite a responsible position, which he lost through no fault of his own."

"Yes, I've heard that from Piddie," says I.

"Have you?" says he. "Then perhaps you will allow me to add that I consider Mr. Mellich a thoroughly deserving as well as a most singularly unfortunate person."

"Yes, Sir," says I. "Maybe I'd best rush him right in, then?"

And I don't know whether it was seen 'Old Hickory' get up on his ear so sudden, or the shocked way the two lady typists was gawped at me, but I couldn't help grinnin' at 'em. Mr. Ellins don't miss the blythe, either.

"It appears," he goes on sarcastic, "that you find something amusing in this affair."

"Me?" says I. "Why, it ain't any of my fun'n'l, I guess."

"Out with it, now!" breaks in Old Hickory. "What's funny about Mellich—or me?"

And there's no us'goin' to sidestep when he comes at you that way. My rule is to give it to him straight. "Why," says I, "from the side lines it looks like a case of a smooth grater meetin' an easy mark."

The typewriter ladies gasped, and I looked for nothin' less than a boiler explosion myself; but you never can tell about Old Hickory. He blows out a cylinder head when you least expect it, and then, when you're bracin' yourself for a regular Vesuvius act, he keeps as cool as a cake of ice. This was one of his frugged times.

"Indeed!" he says, reachin' into a pigeonhole and pullin' out a letter. "Then we will just give you an object lesson, my son, on the folly of unfounded prejudice. Here is a recent letter from Mr. Mellich which states his case fully. While you are waiting outside, read it."

Say, there's no rubber stamp to Old Hickory, is there? He's equal to makin' out a new program for every move on the board, he jeds! If he wants to roost you—why, before you know it, you're done to a crisp; and, if he don't—well, he hands you his private correspondence to read.

IT was an odd frame-up, though—Courtney roostin' plaid on one side of the rail, and me on the other goin' over the evidence. And I must say that for a touch of the side this Exhibit A was a work of art. It's written neat and careful in a round, flourishy hand, and for rar roosties at the bottoms of the upper case I's, and all the final G's and Y's finished off with shaded dashes below the line. Yes, and the word paintin' was some flowy, too.

"ESTEMED AND RESPECTED SIR," it starts out: "Once more I venture to address you on the matter of my ill starred and unfortunate case. I am a man of merit, my very soul racked by remorse and pity for the wretched loved ones who so patiently share the unkind fate that seems so remorseless to you and me; and, if I do not—well, he jeds! you see his private correspondence to read."

There was more of this preliminary stuff; but it was when Courtney got to details that he began to spread the local color thick. Most of one page was all about little Master Elms Mellich; so it looked



He'd Made a Quick Shift of Costume.

like he'd named one of the kids after Old Hickory. According to description, Master Ellins was bad off.

"A fever, brought on by lack of nourishment and a heavy cold on the chest," goes on the letter, "is the probable cause of his untimely condition. At least, we hope it is no worse. But it tears my heartstrings, esteemed friend, when I sit by his little white cot, watching the meaning flash deepen in his thin cheeks, see his big, restless eyes turned appealingly on me, and feel his frail, but fingers clasp mine. Poor little lad! I have told him just now that I would hesitate no longer, that I would pocket my pride and write at once to his kind and generous godfather."

He also mentions his "true hearted and long suffering Dora, my angel wife"; also "little Virginia" and "Baby Ralph—dear him." You could even see some of the scenery as plain as if you was on the spot—the dingy windows, the rusty stove with only a handful of fire in it, and the half lot of dry bread on the table. And, honest, it had me gulin'! You can oath all you want to about the agency work some of these magazine writers throw into Christmas stories and such; but, say, I've seen some hard luck cases myself that couldn't be exaggerated.

So maybe I was swallowin' a little diffidence as I fold the letter and starts starin' out at Mellich. He sars looked the part to the life too, in that rusty black cut-away with most of the buttons missin', and the collar with the fringe effect on the wings, and the frazzled tie, and the patent leather shoes cracked across the instep, and—

But about that I stopped gulin' down lumps of sympathy. It had snowed most of the forenoon, and the sidewalks was a couple of inches deep with slush; but the soles of T. Courtney's old patent leathers was as good as a bone. Had he come all the way from his squalid tenement in a taxi, then? Either that, or else there was a perfectly good pair of storm rubbers done up in that newspaper parcel on his knee. Sure enough, startin' with that clue, I could make 'em out there one and he'd be wruppled carful.

And it was while I was squintin' at the bundle I notices Courtney's fingerin'. Don't take my trained sleuth, either, to tell the diff'rence between a home parin' job done with a pair of shears, and that artistic pointed effect with the glossy finish that the manicure parlor. Why, all the halfmoons was showin' and some of the fingertips was still pink from the lusterite that had been used lavin'. And while there's a two days' growth of beard on Courtney's chin, you could see by the sharp line his hair has in front of his ears that he's been in a barber's chair inside of a week, anyway.

"Huh!" thinks I. "This looks like—"

BUT just then the buzzer goes off and I hops up to go on the carpet again. Old Hickory has shoed out the typists, lit a fresh cigar, and is tilted back easy and restful.

"Well?" says he.

"It's a winner," says I, handin' over the letter, "specially that part about little Master Ellins."

"Yes, yes," says he, wavin' one hand fretful. "Named the boy after me—blasted impudence, as I told him when I heard about it! But then, it's no more—and I can't see such people starve before my very eyes, can I?"

"Been and looked 'em over yourself, then?" says I.

"Why, it amounts to the same thing," says he. "I sent Mr. Fiddle, and he made a thorough investigation."

"Oh, Fiddle did, did he?" says I.

"Certainly," says Mr. Ellins. "He went to the place, somewhere on Allentown. I think."

"Yes, that's the address given in the letter," says I.

"Fiddle may be all right as an investigator, too, but—"

"Well, what then?" snaps Old Hickory.

"Nothing much," says I. "Only musician's must be mighty cheap on the East side these days."

"Manicuring! What has that to do with this case?" he demands.

I explains that, and one or two other points, which sets Old Hickory to puffin' hard on his cigar.

"Humph!" he snorts, after a minute or two. "Storm rubbers and polished fingernails! So that proves Mr. Fiddle a fool, does it? And I'm a dodderin' old idiot, eh?"

"I ain't rubbin' it in," says I. "I was only puttin' it up to you the way I saw it."

"Oh, really?" says he, chavin' his cigar vicious.

"Well, it occurs to me, young man, that you see altogether too much that isn't so. There's such a thing, you know, as being too thunderin' smart. This is a sample."

"Just as you say, Sir," says I, flushin' up and blinin' my lip.

"No, it ain't merely because I say it," he comes back. "Facts talk. That's all I go by—plain, simple facts—while you, you come in here with—"

"Say, I've had a bad chance to produce any facts, ain't I?" says I.

"Blah!" says he, whirin' around. "Why—why—there is something in that. Yes, and, by the seven sanctifying ethers you shall have your chance of course. I'm not anxious to discover that I've been played for a sucker; but if it's so I ought to know it. What do you suggest?"

"I ain't got anything special in mind," says I; "but I could have a few hours on the train, might dig up something, one way or another."

"Done!" says Old Hickory. "Here, hand Mellich this twenty as you go out, tell him to have in a good doctor, and that he's to report to me tomorrow for more funds."

"And do I get some time off for sleuthin'?" says I.

"The rest of the afternoon, if you like," says he. "Only no more dime novel deductions. Stick to facts."

"I'll stick to Mellich," says I.

IT wa'n't any easy job, though. For all his meek ways and droopy eyelids, T. Courtney was no dope. I had to jump down four flights and grab an express elevator while he was waitin' for a local, and at that I only hit the main floor just in time to see him disappear through the swing doors on the Broadway side.

I didn't even dare board the same down-town surface car, for he's standin' on the back platform; but I gets the one next behind, and as they was rammin' on close schedule I was next enough to see him drop off with a green transfer slip in his hand. There was a crush on the cross-town trolley; so I took the chance and made it on a sprint, and when Courtney gets out at Grand and Allen-sts. I was only third out behind him.

A few minutes more, and I know the Allen-st. tenement wa'n't any wild fiction. It's all Courtney had described, with a garbage can decoratin' either side of the doorway, and a gang of dirty kids playin' on the steps. He pushes through 'em like he was acquainted, too.

And, say, as I hangs up across the way and looks over, maybe you can guess the foolish fovlin' that hits me about him. It got worse than that as I thought of the youngster with the fever, back in some dark room there; and Mrs. Mellich, waitin' anxious for Courtney to come back from where I'd been doin' my best to queer him. Honest, I was countin' up what I could do, and figurin' whether it would be best to blow it against a good sartin' roost and fixin' on my own hook, or put it in an envelope and send it in by one of the kids, when—well, out comes Mellich himself.

That is, it was a party of his general build and complexion. The hoodier gear was gone, though, and he had his chin up, and he was wearin' a dirty case swanty. Also he'd made a quick shift of costume, swapped the back number derby for an English cloth cap that matched the tweed slip-on topcoat, and he even had on another collar and tie.

No, he didn't seem to be rushin' out for a doctor; for he steps on the sidewalk long enough to light a cigarette before he starts swingin' back to Grand-st.

WAS I quitfin' at that? Not me! Old Hickory had called for facts, and I was out collectin' all there was. From then on gettin' 'em was a cinch, too; so there ain't any use goin' into details about how I does the faintly shadowy act, but he fixin' to dig through the front door of one of them neat but moderately expensive joints up in the 30's where they have furnished suites for bachelors only.

It wa'n't so nothin' to trip chasin' back alone to Allen-st.; but I wanted to be dead sure. Besides, that gave Courtney time to get well settled where I'd left him. So an hour or so later, when I did push past the hallway at the back, roost, and innards, I bein' shown up by Mr. Mellich at once, I was all primed.

"Come in," sings out Courtney real cheerful as I jobs the button.

Why shouldn't he be chirky? Here he is, all dolled up in one of them long, quilted silk loungin' robes, his feet in a pair of red Romeo slippers, and him stretched out lazy in a big leather chair, one of the latest and no-nonsense thrillers open in his lap, and the cigarettes handy at his elbow.

"Gee!" says I, glancin' around. "This is what I calls real comfort!"

And T. Courtney, he never bats an eyelash. Maybe he did lose a little color as it dawns on him who the butt-in is; but there's nothing like any panic molens.

"Ah!" says he. "My sanny-haired young friend from the Corguagats."

"You're a great describer, Mellich," says I. "Friend is good."

"Oh, I trust that will follow, at least," says he, reachin' out for the dope sticks and pushin' 'em over. "You'll not smoke? Perfectly right, my son, perfectly right. And I presume you are looking for my Uncle Thomas. So am I. I've made myself quite at home. These are his quarters, you know."

"Can it, Courtney!" says I. "It's a good bluff to think up so quick; but it won't stand a call. Uncle Thomas is occupyin' permanent quarters out at Greenwood. I've been down to Allen-st., too."

"Oh, indeed?" says Mellich.

"Uh-huh," says I, lookin' for little Master Ellins, of the restless eye and fevered brow, also for true hearted Dora, and little Virginia, and "Baby Ralph—bloss him."

"Well?" says Courtney, flickin' his cigarette careless.

"It's a swell plant, Courtney," says I, "and I expect with any kind of notice you could produce the whole picture; but what I found was an unfurnished room with your business costume draped on a chair. And little Albie Zinsheimer tells me he does the feverish check-in business at fifty cents a throw."

"Regular Reddus touch, that, an' the little white col."

"What of it?" remarks Courtney. "One must live."

"Oh, sure!" says I. "But you don't waste all that somef'ing fuss on Hiddle and Mr. Ellins, though. Get quite a list of come-on, ain't you?"

"Possibly," says he; "but none who cannot well afford the luxury of soothing a troubled conscience with the blessed balm of private charity. But come! if you have an officer waitin' outside with a warrant, we might as well have him in."

"Who, me?" says I. "Forget it, Courtney. I ain't havin' nothin' pinned; anyway, not sartin' a star performer out of me. All I've doin' is gettin' statistics for a confidential report to back a long oath of mine."

"In that case," says Courtney, jumpin' up and openin' the door poltro, "pray present my compliments to Mr. Ellins, and express my deep regret that he has ceased to be a godfather."

AND he did it without even tellin' loose a grin.

"Well, I'd be eternally gum swizzled!" gasps Old Hickory. "And I had been swallowin' the whole tale, too—well, I'd be eternally gum swizzled. Hm-m-m-m! Young man, I'm going to raise your salary again."

"If that's a threat," says I, "I don't care how good a mem'ry you got, Mr. Ellins. Only don't make the envelope as fat as I'll feed like I had to do stand like this every day. Next time I might get the wrong dope."

DAGOBERT'S CHILDREN

VI. DAGOBERT'S REVENGE

By L. J. BEESTON

BORDENAVE, schoolmaster of Marthe in Alsace, crept away from the inn of the Arc-en-Ciel in the darkness. In his heart was a great hope and a great anguish. At one moment he thought of the *laissez-passer* thrust into his ragged blouse, "the permit through the German lines that was to take him to his wife and his two children. And the next moment he remembered that he had betrayed his chief, and that he had sold Metz.

"What—? I have sold Metz?" he cried, stopping in the roadway and pinching himself to make sure that he was not dreaming.

It will be recollected that he had been imposed upon by that Prussian officer who had fooled even Count Roué DagoBERT; that he had given liberty to the captive whom he believed to be William of Prussia; and that, in exchange for this liberty he had been handed a *laissez-passer* through the enemy's armies. And DagoBERT, deceived by that astonishing likeness to a King, had held his supposed illustrious prisoner as hostage for the fate of Metz itself.

Only when he was alone did the hideous enormity of his treachery begin to press upon him. It was black as the night over him, heavy as the firmament of darkness. Realization gripped him with strangling fingers.

"I have done this thing—no! The price of William's life was Metz, yonder, with two hundred thousand Frenchmen inside the fortifications. And now the city may fall. Great God! The blood of all those Frenchmen is already upon my soul! I have made thousands of widows because I wanted to see my wife! I have made thousands of orphans because I wanted my own children! No, no, it is impossible! I am dreaming, or else I am mad—mad—mad!"

During the next twenty-four hours no one ever knew what became of the schoolmaster of Marthe; and he himself was never able to speak about it. Presumably, overwhelmed by growing horror, his reason forsook him, and he rushed onward, a terrible object, over the roads between Metz and Gravelotte, the highways trampled into rutted mire when the retreating French armies were forced back to the last named place into the enemy's city.

A madman, Bordenave fled amidst the wreckage of ammunition wagons, battery caissons, feasting horses, dead men whose vivid faces stared at a wild sky. Just how long his agony lasted he could never tell; but he awoke from his dream of an eternal nightmare and found himself on a bed.

A sensation of utter weakness made itself felt before remembrance surged through Bordenave's brain. He groaned, and turned his head, which felt heavy as a ball of iron. He caught a glimpse of an open door, and beyond a few straggling dandelions growing out of waste ground. And, as he looked toward the light, he saw a ball of red, a fat, red face, sleeves rolled to the top of her large, coarse arms, and she brought an odor of damp straw. Instantly she observed the wild, staring eyes of the fraise-trier fixed upon her.

"**A**H, mon pauvre, so you have come back?" said the girl, folding her arms and surveying the haggard face with a goodnatured smile.

"Where have I been?" whispered Bordenave.

"In the clouds, my brave fellow."

"I have been ill?"

"How beautiful! Just listen! Of course you are perfectly well now? You will get straight up and kill the King of Prussia—and save Metz—and rescue Bazaine!"

"How? you did great things in your fever, I can tell you."

"How did I get here?"

"The girl shrugged her shoulders. "We found you outside one evening, my mother and I. That was two weeks ago, and—"

"A week!" gasped Bordenave.

"We could not have kept you; but since Metz capitulated to Germany, I have left as alone. I suppose they are all outside Paris. God grant that there is no other Marshal Bazaine—that three accused traitors!"

"Ah!" groaned the schoolmaster. "The city fell? Is that it?"

"There were a hundred and eighty thousand Frenchmen and six hundred guns, and they are lost to France."

"The eyes of the peasant girl flashed fire. For a moment she was transfixed.

"I want to get up!" cried Bordenave in a heartbroken voice.

"Try."

He made the attempt, and sank back as if Sileas. The girl half smiled and went out.

For seven more days the schoolmaster of Marthe tramped on his thousand miles on his hard bed and cursed the day of his birth. He believed that remorse would kill him; but he found himself gaining strength. Then a fixed idea took possession of him.

"I should make the first opportunity of getting shot by the enemy. He would that much to his country and to his God."

At twilight on the eighth day he dressed himself in his soldier's garments which he found in a heap in a corner, and, fearing that an open leak would not be allowed him, left the farm secretly.

Two Prussian officers played chess in the best room of a three-roomed house at the end of a row of a score of whitewashed cottages, almost hovel, which was



He Felt a Crushing Weight Lifted from His Heart.

down on the maps of the German Intelligence Department as Garlsruhe.

It was such a miserable little hamlet that no General of the French army would ever have found it on his maps; but if the Prussians had paid less attention to minutiae of this kind, and the French rather more, the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine might not have changed masters.

"Yes, it is mine, sure enough; but you do not play badly, my dear Fritz. Try again."

The officer who spoke began to rearrange the pieces, which he had found in a writing desk that had belonged to the curé of the place, who had owned the three-roomed house. But the curé and his flock had taken the alarm and vanished.

The player addressed smiled wearily. He detested chess, and played execrably; but, then, the encounter was with his superior officer, which made a difference. He was a slight slip of a youngster, with a silken mustache; while his opponent was a giant, with florid color and a brown beard.

A third Prussian stood before the window, and drummed impatiently upon the cracked pane. He called out, "What the devil! How this place can be of the least importance is more than I can understand. Three of us, with thirty troops, waiting our time when all the fun is rolling toward Paris!"

He received no answer, and continued to stare gloomily into the night. He could just see a sentry standing like a statue at the country approach. Upon the road was a slight sparkling of frost; it was the first touch of the terrible winter.

He turned fretfully. The chess players had entered upon another battle. He looked at the game with a bored air, and then took a long, black cigar from a paper of them on the floor. Even this roused his discontent.

"These filthy things! Two sou each. They say there has been no customs service on the Belgian frontier since Sedan, and I can well believe it! *Himmel!* the French have plotted with the Belgians to flood the country with these cigars in order to poison us. Receiving no attention, he tried to compel a response. "When are we going to get our marching orders, Graf?"

"When we have settled with Chancy," growled the bearded giant. "The fool is playing at trying to cut our communications on the Loire. That is why we are here. I take it. The place is a one-horse affair, true; but if Chancy could take it he would certainly snap a link in our chain. Be quiet! You will make me lose."

"I wish he would try to take it! *Bah!* that would make me change. He hung himself face upward on a springless horsehair sofa and puffled smoke to the grimy ceiling. "But no such luck. It is true that Gambetta, the Jew, has been made Minister of National Defense?"

"And escaped from Paris in a balloon," added the boy with the silken mustache.

"Bah! What lies get about!" growled his opponent. "Your opening in this game, Fritz, was worse than your last. I shall make you in six moves. Six months since I had a really good game at chess. I wish—"

WER'D SA! The shrill yell of the sentry came into the room. It was answered by a shout almost as loud, followed by sounds of a scuffle. The Prussian on the sofa took a leap to the door and rushed out. He returned in a few seconds.

"A prisoner," said he curtly.

"Bring him in," ordered the German Graf. A man with a deathly, livid face, whose knees shook under him, was brought into the room by two troopers. The flesh of his chest showed beneath his ragged gray blouse. He fixed his despairing eyeballs upon the Commandant.

"Who are you?"

"Cornille Bordenave. I was a schoolmaster. I am a franc-tireur."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"Isn't that enough?"

The bearded giant raised his eyebrows. This insolence in the face of death was admirable.

"You were spying?"

"I was not spying."

"Take him out and shoot him!"

"Thanks, Monsieur!" The speaker dropped German for French.

The troopers seized his arms. An expression of extraordinary contentment leaped into the captive's wild eyes. The officers exchanged glances.

"Wait!" cried the Commandant. "Look here—you have not told me the whole story."

"Bordenave passed his hands down his shivering figure. "Oh, yes, life is a supremely delightful thing!" said he.

The boy with the silken mustache shuddered at that frightful tone and all that it conveyed.

The Commandant looked long at the shivering captive, and Heaven knows what was passing in his thoughts! But his face was quite immobile as he said at last, "Yes, shoot him; but search him first."

"For Bismarck's most secret plan," scoffed the third officer.

"A paper, Commandant," said one of the troopers, drawing it from the prisoner's blouse.

The officer ran his eye over it, and a low whistle of surprise broke from his lips. His countenance ventured to over his shoulder, and their eyes opened wider and wider.

"By Jove!" cried one in English.

"*God in Himmel!* it must be the man!" whispered the other.

It was the *laissez-passer* given to the schoolmaster by the supposed King of Prussia, in exchange for his liberty, and for which Bordenave had sold his soul.

The Commandant tapped it with the knuckle of his right forefinger, looking at the captive with a smile parting his bearded lips.

"You know what this is?" he cried not harshly.

"It is a permit signed by the Emperor, a safe conduct for you through our lines."

Bordenave began to mutter incoherent cries. "Bordenave refused to answer, cursing himself for having forgotten to destroy it."

The German took it to fragments with a securely saw. Bordenave breathed again. So he was to die, after all.

"Do you understand the jest that was played upon you?" went on the other.

"Bordenave stared at the Commandant.

"I see that you do not. I will explain. The story spread. You believed that you held prisoner his Majesty the Emperor, and you let him go in exchange for your own life."

"I suppose I did," said Bordenave, his cheeks, who resembles him strangely. It was a joke, you understand. Your Count DagoBERT was nicely fooled. The paper is not worth the rags that cover you, my friend."

Bordenave began to mutter incoherent cries. "A joke!" he echoed huskily. "I did not betray my master, then."

"His bewilderment began to fade as he tried to understand all that was in his mind; but he felt a crushing weight lifted from his heart. A stream of blood rushed into his face. His eyes flashed with a strong light. He was transformed."

"A joke!" Bordenave repeated. "The Commandant?" he shouted. "You are in earnest? *Parbleu!* you must be, or you would not have destroyed that paper! Now Christ and His angels be thanked! God above, Thos art merciful to me!"

Bordenave fell upon his knees. He covered his face with his thin fingers. Racking sobs tore his body.

The boy with the mustache was attacked with a violence of coughing. The Commandant's face was immobile as ever. The third officer sneered. He said:

"All the same, these tears wouldn't save his neck if his Count gets back to Metz. I have heard of this Count DagoBERT and his children. This one betrayed to him by releasing the prisoner. Send him back, my Commandant. DagoBERT will burn him alive, at the least."

The big German patted at his beard thoughtfully. He fixed his round eyes on the prisoner and said nothing. And no one could possibly have guessed what he was

thinking about." He never revealed his thoughts save when he spoke, and even then he was not always to be taken seriously.

A dramatic silence ensued. Bordenave rapidly regained control of himself. He rose to his feet. An astonishing change had come over him; the transformation of one who is publicly declared innocent of a horrible crime. So, after all, the fate of those hundred and eighty thousand Frenchmen, and those six hundred pieces of artillery, was not upon his shoulders! He had set free, not the King of Prussia, but some joker! He had not drawn upon his soul the deep curse of his unhappy France! Guilty in intent, true, but a merciful Providence had saved him from the actual treachery too frightful to contemplate.

Suddenly he thought of Dagobert, and he shuddered. What a feat had been played upon him, to be sure! He imagined the Count's fury. Who had told him the truth? He saw, in a vivid mental picture, Dagobert's pallid face, the blaze of his eyes, the gleam of his teeth. Carried away by this thought, he muttered audibly: "Mon Dieu! to what a revenge he will help himself!" "Silence, you bony cur!" cried the sneerer.

The officer brought Bordenave back to the situation. Dagobert's revenge? Alas! it would be glorious, it would be terrible; but he, Cornille Bordenave, would not live to see it. The others would be there,—Laporte the Zouave, Fonchard the maître d'armes, Jolibois, Remilly,—all the children that remained to the Captain, who were faithful to him, who had not betrayed him in that distant Jordon way. And when Bordenave recalled them, his heart sank deeper and deeper, and he groaned aloud. Two minutes ago he had smiled affectionately at death; now he longed to live with all his soul. God! what would he not give to be out of this hornet's nest into which he had purposely wandered?

THE Commandant at last broke the silence, showing by his words that if his own face never exhibited his emotions, yet he could read the faces of others. He dismissed the troops; then he said:

"I do not imagine that you are quite so ready to die." He stroked his beard still, watching the prisoner stealthily. Bordenave shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you play chess?" Bordenave's eyes opened very wide. He stared from the speaker to the chessboard on the table.

"H? Why—yes," he answered.

"And well?"

"I teach it to my pupils. Yes, I have been called a good player," he replied, much astonished, but speaking without hesitation.

"Good! I will tell you what I will do. I ought to have you shot at once; but because you were hoaxed, and because I want a really good game, I will make you a simple offer. We shall play together three times. If you win two of those games, you will be at liberty to depart. I pledge you my word. On the other hand, if I win two—You understand me?"

"I die, Monsieur le Commandant."

"I pledge you my word that you shall. Frits, arrange the pieces."

"Ah, ah!" murmured the franc-tireur. "My star is

rising higher and higher. I have regained my innocence; and now I am going to win my life. Do I play? *Fordieu!* he does not know that I have not been beaten once during the last three years!"

With eager hands Frits placed the chessmen in position; and his fellow watcher crined a like interest. The excitement of the unusual contest was just what the latter needed to dissipate his boredom. As for Frits, he had taken a liking, almost, to the emotional Bordenave, whom he noticed. Not yet had the campaign turned his heart to stone; and he found himself praying that this woe-begone, haggard prisoner might get out of the net.

The Commandant glanced up at his companions. He said, "This is irregular, Gentlemen; but, friends take it a little amusement will cheer us. If you are going to open your eyes now, you must close your lips—afterward."

They bowed assent. The first game began the next moment.

Both players opened in the style regular, moving their king's pawn to king's fourth square. For five minutes progress on both sides was small. Bordenave yawned. He had intended to act toward his opponent as a cat to a mouse; but, abandoning that idea for an attack as brilliant as it was unconventional, he forced the game. But to his amusement he was not long in making the discovery that his had met an adversary worthy of his steel. Too late he regretted the dazzling and unusual opening intended for a display of his prowess.

"Mate in three moves, I believe!" grunted the Herr Commandant.

The franc-tireur began to rearrange the pieces. "I congratulate you, Monsieur," said he politely.

The Prussian took a cigar from the package, and the boy brought him a light. He had thoroughly enjoyed the game, and was perfectly well satisfied with himself.

Play was resumed. Bordenave had learned his lesson. He adopted a waiting game, what is called the French defense, watching his opponent's line of play with the utmost caution. He perceived the stealthily veiled attack, and perceived it in time. It was frustrated, altogether upset; and after half an hour's play the German surrendered.

The boy officer drew a deep breath.

"*Bitten!* it is a string game to one who doesn't understand it," complained the second watcher, and again he flung himself upon the horsehair sofa.

THE third and final contest began. Both men were

in deadly earnest. The Prussian sat with his long legs doubled under his chair, and his elbows on the table, his cigar stuck out from a corner of his bearded mouth. His black, fatheadless eyes glowed as he bent over the board. He had a perfect mania for his favorite game, and he felt that never more would he know such a contest as this one taking place under his nose.

For awhile neither seemed to gain an advantage. The schoolmaster of Marthe, aware that timidity would probably be fatal, at length began to press. He captured a couple of pawns, and then king's bishop. Suddenly he saw his queen's castle being removed; and the next instant he perceived that he had fallen into a

trap. Was it too late to get out of this hole? Obviously he must abandon the offensive.

"Bah! I have been in uglier positions," he told himself. All the same, a trickle of sweat ran down his forehead.

The officer on the sofa got up, yawning, and cast a cursory glance at the board; then he noticed the set, pained expression on the face of the boy, and burst into a laugh.

Bordenave thought that this laugh was directed toward him. The cold dew thickened upon his forehead, and his heart began to labor heavily. Ah! if he were but placed in normal circumstances he would show this silent adversary what chess was! But he was weak through hunger; his nerves were slack through illness; and the issue of the game was too great. It lay upon him as a nightmare.

"Check!" grunted his opponent. Bordenave moved his queen's pawn. Disaster was not yet, at any rate.

They went on for ten more minutes. "Check!" exclaimed the Commandant again.

Bordenave fought him off.

"Check!" once more came the ominous warning.

"*Diablo!* this will be my last game on earth," thought the franc-tireur. "He will beat me, and then he will keep his word and have me shot."

Which was precisely what the Herr Commandant intended.

"There are seven moves between me and death," meditated Bordenave. He looked up, and his eyes, which had in them the expression of a worried horse upon whom wolves are closing, met those of the boy officer.

There was genuine sympathy in the responding glance.

"The door is behind him," reflected the Frenchman.

"He may not be in a hurry to stop me if I make a rush for it. A rush? *Tounerre!* they would have me before I could cover ten yards."

The board seemed to move before his blurred sight.

He hastened calamity by a wild move. The Prussian lifted his thick brows in mild astonishment. His finger and thumb were in the act of making the final move, when he became rigid, holding his king's bishop suspended above the board.

THE sound of a horse's hoofs rang out on the frost

hardened highway. High and furious sounded this galloping of someone who rode like the wind. The sentry's challenge was answered by the shout of a voice that cried something in German, and suddenly there came a beating of a sword handle upon the door, followed immediately by the entry of a tall, lean man,

with a high, thin bridged nose and a long, gray mustache. He had upon his head a cap with scarlet plumes; and there were silver epaulettes upon his shoulders. His spatted heels clanked as he strode into the room and saluted.

"Captain Shoden!" he demanded in a harsh, grating tone.

The Commandant, controlling a scowl, rose from the table. He returned the salute and took the despatch the messenger handed to him, tearing it open viciously.

His companions watched him. But Cornille Bordenave

looked on his face.

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"There Are Seven Moves Between Me and Death," Meditated Bordenave.

HER WORD OF HONOR

BY EDITH MACVANE

CHAPTER XVI.

I MUST own, however, that Henry's first move after dinner compelled my admiration. I saw him smiling for the first moment with Miss Geraldine. She was kind and pleasant. Miss Geraldine was not at all a flirt, as Aunt Elizabeth said. The next moment she came over to where Victor and I were standing together, and invited us to go so sweetly—to come and look at the collection of boats, models that Henry's father had left.

"Where's every kind of paint and a galley and junk that was ever invented," Mr. Cobb," she said, "and I rely on you to explain them all to me." I hear you're extraordinarily clever at that sort of thing.

Victor, brimming with gratified vanity, professed himself quite willing to act as the lady's teacher. So she invited two or three others to accompany them—and she managed so well that before I knew it Victor was holding forth to an attentive audience of girls at one end of a long, dimly lit gallery, and Henry and I were examining Sappho's jewelry at the other.

Henry looked at me coldly, and my heart sank. "You seemed very well entertained at dinner, Mademoiselle," he said.

Ah! I understood! He was jealous—jealous of Victor! I burst into unsteady laughter. "I was trying to persuade him—to refuse to marry me," I said.

He drew a long breath, and I saw by his face that he wanted to take me in his arms, as he had done that day in the water. The blood ran to my head, I felt all giddy and light and happy—oh, so wickedly, piercingly happy! We smiled at each other.

"I'm ridiculous, forgive me," he said; "but somehow, to see you with that fellow— Listen, Lili!" he interrupted himself hurriedly. "We have only a few moments to speak together and much to be said. You know what I feel toward you—don't you? These days that you have been my mother's guest, I have tried to respect you and your situation as another man's promised wife. It's been a tough struggle; but I've kept my mouth shut—haven't I? Haven't I? Look at this pendant! The carving of these turquoises is considered very remarkable.

For a moment, as the conversation at the other end of the hall subsided, he thrust a large lump of a silver ornament into my hands. I touched it mechanically with a wandering finger. Ah! to be near Henry, to see his face and hear his voice, to speak with him at last—heart open to heart!

"But tonight, Lili, my mother has come to me with the most extraordinary story—the most amazing! Listen! Have I understood it rightly? Is it true in the first place that Mother knew your family long ago in France, and that you came to America with the single object of finding her?"

Ah, my family! Even to this son of hers, she had not spoken of Papa. No, the dear, long-dead past, I saw, was to remain forever a secret between Harriet and me. Somehow, the thought, sinking through the confusion of the moment, drew me closer to her, nearer in spirit even than to her son. Ah! the dear, dear friends that tonight I must leave forever!

"Listen, Li! And is it true also that you are marrying this fellow Cobb only on account of a compact made with his mother before your arrival at New York; that if you could not find us, your friends, you would enter the house of Mrs. Cobb; that she should give you her protection and supply your needs, and that you in turn should marry her son?"²⁶

I felt my face burn with shame. How ugly it sounded, our bargain, how sordid, thus stated by the person whose respect I wanted, more than anyone else's in the world!

"Yes," I answered feebly, forcing myself to tell the truth, "that was our understanding. But please don't think too badly of me for consenting to it. You see, I had been brought up to ideas of marriage very different from those you have here, you other Americans. Oh, yes, I had heard of the American system, but I had never been here in America! But then it seemed quite natural, and my duty besides, to accept the husband picked out for me by someone older and cleverer than I. To be sure, I had never seen him; but, on the other hand, he was willing to take me without a sou of dowry. That was my great difficulty, after all. You see, poor Papa had misfortune to leave he died, and there it stood before me, that dowry, that single sou, with General on my back, and only five hundred francs in the whole world!"

"Poor little girl!" Henry's voice actually shook, and his eyes were—oh, so kind as he looked at me, but with something behind them that made me tremble too! "Poor, beautiful little thing! After all, you might have fallen into worse hands than Mrs. Cobb's. But, God knows, hers were bad enough! Look here—this infamous compact, you are sure it was made before you

"It was made on the sea—in the harbor, before we landed." I began to tremble—what was coming now?

"But on the steamer, I mean. The conditions were explained to you, you had given your promise assenting

to them *before* you left the ship, and not after? The compact was made between you and Mrs. Cobb, that is, before your foot had touched American soil?"

"Yes—yes!"

LILL, come here!" It was Victor's voice. I turned faint and ill with vexation; but what could I do? He advanced toward me with a Battle boat model in his hand. "Lill, see this junk! Isn't it a peach? Let's have one made for our wedding trip, instead of the Brunshilda, shall we?"

Victor was in drunk spirits, so much was plain. The champagne he had drunk, the thought of his approaching independence, Innes Carroll's beauty and obliging flatteries,—all these influences had combined to exalt him and make him very ready to claim me as his property before this mournful of people. Oh, the unhappiness, the degradation, of that moment, as I realized that to his words, as to his glance, I had no choice but to submit, and to become the property of Le Chevalier, even if he called me a slave. Never was Scheuchzen half so much a slave as I, and by no recounting of a thousand tales, or a million either, could I hope ever, even to be free!

But what, after all, was Henry on the point of telling me? I burned with impatience. I could have killed poor Victor at that moment, as he went on making his silly jokes about the junk and our Chinese honeymoon and the ragout of moose we'd eat together—disgusting! But finally Miss Carroll, in response to an imploring glance from Henry, had the happy thought of proposing that Victor delight the company with a song.

"I've heard you sing the cozier songs most deliciously, Mr. Cobb. And I'll play your accompaniment. Is it a barcarole?"

"Sure!" Victor, always ready to show off his voice, beamed with gratified vanity. Then, turning, "You come, Lili?"

It was his Sultan look and tone. I stood confused, daring neither to follow nor to stay behind. But Miss Carroll, the dear angel, showed herself a champion not easily defeated. She pouted enchantingly.

"No, Mr. Cobb, you've promised to sing 'Dear Lizer' for me—and this time it's to be for me and not for your fiancée. I don't care if you are jealous, Mademoiselle. Besides, we are sometimes said to look alike; though perhaps I flatter myself too horribly. Would it be too much of a strain to make the illusion for five minutes, dear Mr. Cobb?"

"I'm coming, Victor!" I hastened to add. But Miss Carroll had already borne him off, hypnotized.

AND in a moment the doleful strains of one of those abominable London songs came floating endlessly from a distant room. The other people one by one melted away. Henry leaned toward me.

"Listen, Lill! I have to tell you: such a compact as you entered into with Mrs. Cobb and by which you fancy yourself bound, is by the laws of these United States entirely null and void!"

The room swam around me. I was conscious of Henry's hand upon my arm, holding me up. "What?" I gasped. "I'm free? You mean, my promise doesn't hold me? You mean—what do you mean?"

"I mean," he answered slowly and distinctly, so that I might understand every word, "that such an agreement as you describe is by American law utterly illegal; as Mrs. Cobb, the widow of a business man and a first rate business woman herself, they say, ought to have known—indeed, probably did know. Did you never hear 118 of the Contract Labor Law?"

"No," I answered, shaking my head. But I clung to the impressive sounding word on Henry's lips, as the other day in the water I had clung to his arm. "No, I never did."

"To be sure, how should you? But here in this country, like, we have a law forbidding an alien, before his arrival here, from entering into any contract whatsoever providing for his employment after he lands. That

[illegible]

"What? Is it true? The law is like that, is it? A contract entered into before landing in America? Yes, certainly we hadn't landed yet! But," a cold thought struck me, "you spoke of 'employment.' I just promised to marry Victor. Perhaps that wasn't employment, after all." My voice trailed away and broke into tears.

"For the employment of your time, for the disposal of your person, in return for a pecuniary compensation?" Henry returned with violence. "If that's not a contract of employment in its crudest sense, what is? You yourself own there was no question of sentiment on

either side. Did Mrs. Cobb invite you to her house, offer you protection and maintenance, as an act of disinterested friendship; and then, as an act of friendship on your part, beg you to lend her your social influence, and offer you the opportunity of marriage with her son?"

"I shirk my head," No, unless I gave my word of honor to marry Victor, and to get Aunt Elizabeth to present her at Court, there was not even a question of my entering her door. But then I was a stranger to her."

Henry interrupted me triumphantly. "You see! All the qualities of a contract, in their purest form. That is, the special action on each side was to be made wholly conditional on the performance of a certain action on the other side. Unless you rendered her payment by entering her house, she was not obliged to give you your person, name, and social influence, and by marrying her son, she was not obliged to spend a single dollar on you. And you, on your side, unless she paid you by giving you your maintenance,—that is to say, by clothing you, by paying your travelling expenses, etc.—you were not to be obliged—"

"But, oh," I cried, "she has!" In spite of my agency at the admission, the mere necessity of telling the truth tore the words from me. "She has! She's kept her word to the last letter of it, and more! Look! These pearls, this satin dress, she gave me. She gave me my home here, my beautiful home, the automobiles that I have here, my very own car. I have a very opportunity to meet you—you and your dear son, to keep nothing back, not even her clear skin, which she thinks the finest present of all!" Beneath the tortured touch of my fingers I felt my little lace handkerchief (another present from Mrs. Cobb; value, a hundred francs) dissolving its fine-spun meshes into shreds. "I have, I have," I cried, "but she has kept her part of the compact to the very letter, how can I refuse to perform mine?"

"For that very reason," answered Henry with intensity. "Because the very fact that, in return for what you have received from her, you yourself have a pledged duty to perform, proves the existence of a contract; and a contract made in such circumstances as this one is legally no contract at all; is, in fact, in and of itself, a grave offense against the laws of this land. Darling, don't you understand? The promise that held you to no promise at all. Your delicate scruples that do you so much honor are absolutely without basis in fact. You are free, Dearest! Don't you understand you are free?"

I stood stupidly, still with the great silver and turquoise ornament dangling from my hand. This, then, was the end? The strangling mesh that had held me so tightly, so easily, as this was to be thrown off, after all? Here, then, was the goal toward which for so many sad weeks and by so many tortuous ways I had been traveling. I had come to this, to this! I had come to the end and the tears, this was what had been waiting for me all the time—just Henry with his arms outstretched? I let the precious lump of silver go crash to the floor, and held out my two hands to him with a little cry.

"Oh, I love you!" I said. Probably it wasn't right for me to speak that way, before he had said it. But I could not help it, it was the truth. "Oh, I love you, you love you so!" I heard myself gasping, over and over again.

HENRY glanced quickly round. In the long room we were alone together. The next instant I felt his arms around me, just like the other day. But this time there was no icy water crawling between us, nothing to keep us apart any more. For a moment he held me close so close, it seemed that my heart had stopped beating, and my legs were no longer mine, but his.

Then with a long sigh that seemed to tear all the breath from his body, he released me. "My beauty," he said, "my precious, my own, my very own! Then it is settled, this other miserable business is over and done with, and you marry me!"

Whether it was the law he had just expounded to me, or just the worthless influence of his lips, which tingled with the force of his strange dog, I cannot tell you. But my will power ran for a moment, and I was free. Afternoon had seemed so important were no longer more than an ancient prejudice already outgrown and forgotten. In my whole being there was room for no more than one gigantic fact,—I was Henry's and he was mine! My very arms knew him for mine, my very lips claimed him! Therefore, was not any idea that might keep me apart from him, or that might prevent my loving him, but I did not think all this: I only felt it. When we are very happy I find that we do not think. And I was happy at last. Oh, divine revelation! Oh, wild and tender moment when Henry stood there beside me with the love in his eyes and bent my will to his own!

"Oh! Oh!" I cried, and my laughter changed to a sob in my throat. Too much! Ah! it was not too much.



It Seemed That My Heart
Had Stopped Beating.

if at the end of my long search I had at last found you, my husband, and you are Henry after all?"

"Yes. Tomorrow morning we will telephone all over the island, if need be, till we find a minister to marry us, and a priest too if you wish, Darling. The more they marry us, the better! Then off in the auto—our auto, you remember it?—for New York. Then, on the first steamer that has place vacant for us, we sail for France. You'll like that, my little love?"

"Oh! Oh!" I could only gasp. He was too good, and I was too happy.

"Then that's settled. I'll tell Adams immediately to get New York tomorrow morning, the very instant that the agency opens, to engage our suite. And in New York you can buy whatever you need for your trip. For you keep nothing, that's understood, that that woman gave you!"

"And Mrs. Cobb?" I began to tremble: the mere syllables of her name seemed like dreadful teeth, gnawing and crunching the flowers of my dream. "Oh, Henry! I'm so afraid! Perhaps, after all, he won't let you—"

"She won't be asked!" He towered up, strong and splendid enough to conquer a whole regiment of Mrs. Cobbs and Victors too. Oh, how I admired him, how I loved him, how I wanted him! And he was mine—mine!

"Listen!" he said. "You'll go to bed immediately, please. I'll ask my mother to tell the people you have a bad headache and had to retire. Meanwhile I'll pass in Mrs. Cobb into my private study and explain to her how the case stands."

"Ah!" I looked at him, speechless at so much bravery. How differently he spoke from Victor, an hour ago! He smiled at me.

"To get you, my beauty, my love, I'd fight Apollon himself; so, with the law on my side, I think I can man-

age poor Mrs. Cobb. Of course, I'll explain to her that every penny she has spent on you shall be refunded, down to these cursed wedding cards and the wedding cake itself, if she has ordered it. The wedding cake!—Excuse me, Sweetheart, but I think I'm a little bit off my head tonight."

He stood staring at me with a kind of dazed look in his eyes, and I could see that nothing was farther from his idea, after all, than saying goodnight and letting me go. But the hour was growing late, our absence would be remarked, Mrs. Cobb would be coming for me to go home—

"Henry?" I implored him, "please get it over with! Go and find her at once!"

"I'm going, Dearest. So you authorize me to speak to her as your lawyer, of course? For, naturally, we say nothing of our marriage tonight. Now, so much to her as a glad surprise!"

"As you like, dear Henry. You know so better than I. Look how I have bungled my affairs all by myself, and have to leave you to get me out! But at once, please!"

"Very well, Sweetheart. Look! Here's a door that you can go upstairs by, without passing all that crowd. I say, Fanny Carroll's a corker, isn't she? It's she that's kept the crowd away and given us this chance to talk. My precious one, my adorable one! For the last time that we shall have to say it to each other, goodnight!"

HE kissed me, opened the door, and I fled upstairs. The blood was pounding in my ears, my head seemed floating off in a kind of dim mist. Poor old Genevieve, who had made up all the luggage and was sitting there among the valises waiting to be off, was amazed at my sudden appearance with the order to put me to bed where I had slept for the last two nights.

"I find myself a little unwell, Genevieve. We have decided that, after all, it's better that I sleep here tonight and leave in the morning."

For, Genevieve, even though she's a dear old thing, was not a person to be taken into my confidence. No, our beautiful plans should remain a secret between my well-beloved and me, for a few sweet hours yet.

"Give me a pigeon, Genevieve, and take down my hair."

Ten minutes later, as I was lying on the sofa, and Genevieve was bathing my forehead with Lily of the Valley water, I heard a light tap at my door. Was it Mrs. Stuart? Or was it Mrs. Cobb, forcing herself past Henry's explanations, coming to demand me with all her natural violence? But—oh, I was not her stupid boy Victor, to be bullied as she chose! I had Henry on my side, I had the law on my side, and I was not afraid to stand up for my rights!

Meanwhile, Genevieve was opening the door; and to my surprise not one form but two sailed in, one in blue, the other in pale gray. But above their immaculate dinner toilets Mrs. Stuart's face glowed a disfiguring crimson, Mrs. Cobb's showed an odd and livid white. Suddenly my heart, swelled with joy and courage so immeasurable, shrank as it seemed to the size of a pin-point. I heard Mrs. Cobb speaking, in a voice whose sweetness contrasted oddly with her drawn and excited look.

"Mrs. Stuart, I thank you more than I can tell for your kindness toward this dear child, even for that excess of goodness which fears the effect of her seeing me; but I can assure you, your fears are groundless. Life, my dear little daughter, how are you feeling now?"

With the most affectionate air in the world, she came and knelt down by my sofa; but the face she bent over me was so terrible that I closed my eyes.

"Better," I murmured, "quite well now."

"My poor darling! All this excitement, this fatigue, has been too much for her. Mrs. Stuart, I think perhaps you were right, and the strain of seeing more than one person at a time may be too much for her. This poor little girl of mine! Yes, I think, Mrs. Stuart, that you were entirely right."

At this turning against her of her own gains, I could see Mrs. Stuart launch and bristle; but what could a creature gentle and sweet as she do against an emboldened force like the woman who knelt over me? "Oh, stay! stay!" I wanted to cry out loud. But Mrs. Cobb's eyes were on me, through my closed lids I felt them, and I dared not speak.

"Very well then, for five minutes," I heard Mrs. Stuart say in an irresolute tone. The next minute I heard the door close softly.

GENEVIEWE, are Mademoiselle's trunks ready?"

The manner of this question, this contemplation passing over of me and my possible virtues, roused my spirit. "Throwing off my old nurse's hand and the perfume soaked cloth, I sat bolt upright with wide open eyes."

"No, dear Mrs. Cobb. I have decided not to go home tonight, after all. You see, Mrs. Stuart has been so kind as to—"

"Genevieve, you may leave the room!"

Though Mrs. Cobb's French accent might leave some room for doubt, her gesture could not. The next moment we were alone. And Mrs. Cobb, having with cautious motions opened all the doors and peered without, came back to the sofa again. As for me, I remembered the toothbrush in the garden and braced myself to fight for my rights. This indomitable woman should see at last that she had not let me down!

But when she spoke it was in a quiet, suppressed sort of voice.

"Lili, I can see that you're expecting me to make a scene—just as Mrs. Stuart expected when an instant ago, with rather misplaced officiousness, she tried to prevent me from entering your room. I'm not going to make a scene, my dear child; so don't clutch your fists and roll your big black eyes. I'm not going to remind you of the position in which, by your desertion of us in the eleventh hour, you place my son and me. We discussed this fully after your flight. You know as well as I do the ruin that you're making; so we'll leave that topic alone. I have come merely to ask you, is it true, this story that I hear now from Henry Stuart, who tells me that he acts as your attorney?"

Before her violence, how easily I had defended myself! But this tragic gentleness cut the ground from beneath my feet, and my heart quivered to perceive the sudden aging of her appearance. At the dinner table she had appeared, as usual, well preserved, discreetly powdered, almost young; but now—what an old, old woman she had! Her bitter face shone with a gleam.

"So it's the provisions of the Contract Labor Law," she said, "that release you from your promise to me. Very ingenious, upon my word, and the kiss reflects tremendously upon the legal astuteness of your mother! Mrs. Stuart! Only you see, I never thought of being clever. If I had, I might have articles properly drawn up after our arrival in New York, and regularly signed and sealed. In fact, I might have done so if I had picked you up out of the storeroom, and engaged you as my cook; but, you see, I took you for a lady, and I didn't ask you to be my cook: I asked you to be my daughter."

It was not so easy, after all, to defend my side! But with feeble resolution I tried to parry some of her accusations, even as Mrs. Stuart had done.

"I know," I said, "that according to your part of the contract you have spent a great deal of money on me. That money, Mrs. Cobb, shall be repaid to me to the last centime. So the justice is done."

I began pulling at the huge solitary skirt sparkling on my hand.

Her face burned a dull red, and I suddenly felt a new



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that there are times when her own milk disagrees with her baby.

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we had to wait three long hours in the sun; because, owing to a strike of the men who load the cargoes and freight and things like that on the steamers, there had been a delay in the last steamer sailing, and the poor Maurens had to wait before she could get into her dock. Such mountains of boxes and barrels and bales of cotton as there were piled all around us, with the company's officers and policemen trying to push them about and people scolding because their friends couldn't land, and Mrs. Cobb raving at the top of her voice, and threatening to sue the company—so that there could be no doubt in the minds of the other people around us, at least, that we had come to meet a Duchess. However, in spite of everything, the wait came to an end at last. And there was Aunt Elizabeth!

It's all very well to criticize your relatives and make fun of them, and even run away from them; but your own blood, you know—that's something! And when you see your own people again in a foreign land, after not seeing them for a long time—why, a great lump comes into your throat, and when you feel their arms around you, you feel as though you had come home! When Aunt Elizabeth kissed me, it seemed to me that I had never been grateful to her or loved her enough. Then Uncle Porthaven and the girls—as they crowded around me, kissing me, and telling me how pretty I looked, and congratulating me on my fine marriage—why, in the joy of finding myself among my own again, I almost forgot just a minute—almost, but not quite—the sea-breeze I carried. Ah, if all this fuss and these happy arrivals had been for my marriage with Henry!

HOWEVER, I had little time to think. The customs men were coming up with their armory of questionnaires, and the Captain was paying his compliments to the Duke, and the passengers were edging up trying to get a word in with the Duchess, and getting frozen stairs through an eyeglass. She looked just the same, Aunt Elizabeth—her old broad skirt had slipped up slightly in front, her large pocket with pockets like a man, and her little felt hat with a priceless veil of Chantilly about it. The girls, however, appeared very well—Porthaven a gown of raspberry pink, Muriel in pale olive green, Rembrandt in white slightly edged, as usual, with gold—though they were still boys' dear suspicions, after the American palor, looked amazingly fresh and lovely. And as they huddled together in that frightened way of the fresh young girls who, around their imposing maids, it must be owned that they had a certain air of being so-called, they were all boys' dear suspicions, after the American palor, looked amazingly fresh and lovely. And as they huddled together in that frightened way of the fresh young girls who, around their imposing maids, it must be owned that they had a certain air of being so-called, they were all boys' dear suspicions, after the American palor, looked amazingly fresh and lovely.

"So your new husband doesn't show you, Lili?" said Aunt Elizabeth, looking about with her girl eyes.

"No, Aunt Elizabeth. You see, he—he felt a little shy about intruding on our first meeting. But he will call to pay his respects to you at your hotel this afternoon."

"Ah! Charming young man, I suppose?" As Mrs. Cobb was listening, I could almost say less than, "Oh, charming!"

"Hm! Delectable, you said?"

"Yes, your Grace," interrupted Mrs. Cobb, flattered as I had never seen her at this flesh and blood presence of the Duchess. "On the morning of my dear boy's marriage I sign articles conveying to him property to the amount of twenty-five million dollars."

"Dollars! Why not pounds? How much is a dollar, anyway?"

"Four shillings and twopence, your Grace." "Dear me! Why can't you just make me the round four shillings', without stoppin' every time to bother over that extra twopence?" William bawled much is twenty-five million dollars, in real money!"

Uncle Porthaven's voice, usually so languid, took on tones of unaffected interest as he gazed with the imposing figure, "Five millions sterling, my dear."

"Ah, not bad! Not bad at all! And of this sum I suppose a fifth portion will be settled by marriage articles on my dear niece? However, we will speak of that later."

My dears, here is the gauntlet. Be careful of the gauntlet. Muriel, you are too in as usual! Portia, hold up your hand!

ON the drive home in the automobile she confided to me that she had come to America with the intention of leaving the two daughters at least before she left America. To be sure, the idea was a painful one; but beggars couldn't be choosers. There was no blinlin' fact that Portia had been out eight years and Muriel six, with no tolerable offerin' but a curate or two and a poor whose name was quite impossibly damaged through her lent too often to flydown ventures in the city.

"Money, my dear, much money, is what my poor girls must have, even if we have to reach ourselves to Americans. Your fiancé,

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YOU would quickly starve to death on a food that contained no salt—even if it were 100% nourishment.

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As ordinarily used you may not taste the bitter flavor. But there is an easy way to test salt for yourself. Here it is:

Make a little salt brine with a teaspoonful of Worcester Salt and half a glass of water. Do the same with any other salt. Taste these brines one after another. Your tongue will tell you instantly that Worcester leaves no bitter taste—that it is sweeter and saltier than any other.

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worse insect pests." The Olivers had been telling him about Bung. "Chinamen and Japs are bad caterpillars from different eggs. Don't like each other. Course they don't. The army worm doesn't like the red scale, because they're both bent on the same sort of mischief."

"I've always regarded Bung as different," said the Judge. "He has done me a good and faithful servant. When I first came here, an inviolate from Massachusetts, we didn't grow much of anything on the place but greasewood and mortgages. Bung dropped in from nowhere, a buggard, middle-aged Chinaman with one eye. He said he liked the place and wanted to stay forever—which seemed an almost fanatical wish of his, considering how the march looked at that time. That Chinaman was certainly a godsend to me. He did the heavy work, plowing and planting and harrowing—wasn't he a help to us, Mr. Oliver?"

"He certainly was!" said Mrs. Oliver thoughtfully. "Half the time he cooked breakfast for us, and nights he took care of Tommy, who was a baby then. He was crazy about children, like all Chinamen."

"Tommy was two years old," resumed the Judge. "Goodness! how fast they grow! I reckon he saved the baby's life two or three times—if you count the time he killed a live snake with a diphen, and the time when Tommy had a fever and Bung rode nine miles on a wild horse to get a doctor."

"Most Chinamen are deathly afraid of horses," said Fredericksen. "Bung is no exception. And I count that rather though it has been a help to me among the latest acts of moral heroism I have ever witnessed."

The smoke wreaths rose calmly while the little mill in the long dry grass ground their insect mills.

"Doesn't he flock with other Chinamen?" asked the man from San Francisco. "Nonsense. Bung is a hermit and an eccentric. He never goes to town. Once a month for the last twenty years he has mailed a letter to Sacramento. There's a mystery about that man. Must have had some tremendous row with his people, the way he avoids 'em. Again the Judge pulled out his pipe. "I hate to tell you, but I'm the only Chinaman I ever had who could get along with white help. I remember back in '86 we had an Irishman under the place, and he was a real good deep and noisy rascal aversion to Bung that I thought I'd have to discharge 'em both to keep peace in the family. One day I went out with them to stack some hay. All morning Bung and Donnivan worked silently together, side by side. At noon we sat down to lunch under the trees. It was Friday, and out of respect for Donnivan's religious principles I had included a can of salmon in the basket. He took the can, opened it and dumped its contents on his plate. 'What for?' shouted Bung, who also liked fish. 'Now Bung, me boy,' said Donnivan. 'I don't want to tell you—I got me a religion, and ye got yours.'—Oh, I s-l-u-b-y—-you flash! said Bung sweetly. And the two were friends from that day on."

OUT back of the orchard Tommy Oliver walked lugubly toward "Bung's cottage." The sun shone blinding just above the Coast Range now, and the living tapestry of mesquit, oak, and mountain laurel hung rich and splendid against Heaven's western side, and those three little fellows, mollusks, snails, gave a curious effect of antiquity. Out there must be miraculous ships of fools among the foliage—grants, great limbed fellows, transplanted like the vineyards from the hills of Thessaly; ebullient seedlings teapay with summer and shouting "Hi!" to the god of the silver rods.

From the lovely brook just ahead issued a high, nasal songing in clearness and sentiment, ending in a flourish. Bung was in front of his dwelling, alone on a fruit crate, praising the sunset—or maybe it was a Cantonese music hall lady he was attacking.

Flirting-top see-ya-hi!
Wash-hing-goo!

Or so it sounded. Three sticks of punk, stuck in a bean can, smoldered by the door. The old man was rolling cigarettes as he smoked. Cornucopia-shaped, almondbrown, they were, wrapped in white letter paper and filled with a pink tobacco that smelled to the morning stars. He was very proud of his art in equipping the evening, and at last he would roll two or three dozen of these monstrosities and stuff them into the pocket blouse, ammunition against the morrow's flies.

"Goo-eveving, li' boss!" he cried cheerfully. "You like 'em, 'Gretel?"

No, thanks, Bung," said Tommy Oliver, seeing himself on a stump. He had tried Bung's favorite brand once. The door of

Bung's cottage was gaudy tonight. It was mottled with new strips of red paper bearing inscriptions in Chinese.

"You've got plenty of devil paper out to-day, Bung," observed the young man, approaching the red devil himself.

"Oh, yes—devil devil everywhere today. Black devil, red devil, he no bother—Japanese devil worst kind."

Tommy panted and whistled a bit. "How long has he been working for us, Bung?"

"No sabe how many—maybe twenty-five, maybe thirty, year. Say—how, no can tell."

"Not so much as that. Twenty years."

Bung looked up suddenly and fixed Tommy shrewdly with his single eye. "Mio Tommy," he said, "wha' for you go fire me today?"

"Fire you! Who said we were going to fire you?"

"Oh, me sabbe plenty. Japanese boy come. China boy go—by his plenty soon. Take too muchee punk stick drive away Japanese devil."

"Well, Bung," said Tommy, resolved to speak now or never, "you see it's just like this."

"Wha' for you makee long talk, li' boss? Me go." He attacked his stick grimly, demanding so low that his short, gray pugilist swung his head shouldle.

"You won't need to work any more," said the lad. "You must have saved quite a pile of cash in all these years."

"Me save cash?" Ah, Lee Bung laughed. "Ho! 'Chin' fashion. Tommy, you make joke talk poor old Bung!"

"Twenty dollars a month for twenty years—"

"Me tellee you how was. Long time by-by, belfo me come here. Me was plaining to you, Chang, see! See Tommy, Jim hevly bad boy, but nice friend to me. He drink gin wat, smoke um bop, play um cards, and hevly bad. See him, how he play American polka game. Ay-yi! Polka, he velly bad game!"

"Don't you play poker too?" asked Tommy.

"One time—no mo," answered Bung gruffly. "My cousin Jim him get velly swell job. Higglee feller make him cash money. I see him, hevly good."

"Treasurer. I guess you mean."

"Maybe so was. One time Jim make collect money from me. See him, how he play! That night he play polka game—too muchee jackpot—by-by cash! All gone! Polka game keep small gambles."

"You mean your cousin Jim lost the Sam Yung's money?"

"You sabbe plenty. Sam Yung gam man he playe bad, makee change-chang. But cousin Jim he too smart—he skip away China plitty quick. Then Sam Yung gam man come 'long catches me. All Sam Yung told praver meeting. 'Lee Jim skip away—all him, we got his cousin Bung,' said President Sam Yung Society—him velly was temperance. 'Shout, how we say 'long boy!'"

"Bung go dead, we no catches 'o thousand dollar just same," said other boy. But Sam Yung president—him velly wise, stingy man, he say, 'Bung, you count one money you no pay it, you die.'—'Me no got money—where I catches? me say to president, 'I want to playe go work, outside the gate. Each month I want fifteen dollah Sam Yung Society till all paid. You come back before then, Bung, you die.' That happen twenty year ago. Each month I send fifteen dollah Sam Yung Society till now I paid—look see!"

At last the old fellow showed an interminable row of Chinese figures written with a dull pencil on a board beside the door.

"I paid Sam Yung Society thirty-five hundred dollars. One him 'long to him, dollar—stommy must pay."

Tommy studied the twisted Chinese characters with a wondering expression.

"Jerre-noo-sha!" he exclaimed. "Of all the official nonsense! Why, Bung, you've practically said yourself into slavery to pay the debt of a dead man!"

"He my cousin," said the old Chinese with dignity.

"Add if you go back to any California city, I suppose—"

"I catches shoot. Sam Yung got plenty gun men San Francisco, Maryville—all big gun. For him, Bung, he go back—look!" He pointed his long tangerine, pistol fashion, with deadly aim. "I no can go back. Judge Olvin velly good keep me so long. I stay in here, I no go back now. I no like go there now."

His smooth cheeks began to wrinkle with misery.

"You must have friends in China," suggested Tommy.

"No mo'. One time one catches wife back China, hevly cheap cash to her, say 'Come San Francisco plitty easy. Blabany plague blowe out in China. She no come.'"

Ah, Lee Bung gathered together his hand

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